

## Sacred Places and Pilgrimage\*

**Baidyanath Saraswati**

**Prof. Kasai:** I think Professor Saraswati has been known already to you through various ways. I must say that, now, the moment of departure is coming. And the moment of the union has been so much a blessing. And we have been enjoying through him real, real precious, hidden message from India. So, the moment of life is here and we share with him. And some of you are also experiencing that moment of life with him. Now this will be the last message from him. And the topic is ‘pilgrimage,’ which is the life itself. So, we can expect that the message from India will be with us.

**Prof. Saraswati:** When I came here a few days ago, it pleased me: a happy reunion with Professor Kasai, the beauty of the Maple Grove, the wisdom of the great teachers of ICU, and the purity and tenderness of the students — their true human love. And when I think that after a few hours I won’t be here, I go sad. To speak on such a moment is not easy. However, it is appropriate for the occasion to speak on pilgrimage, the journey to a destination which is so near and yet so far. Briefly, the view in question is that in his inner life man is a pilgrim, longing for experience and perception which lie beyond. At another level, pilgrimage is a way of life — ‘inner’ and ‘outer.’

Two days ago, Ishizaka and Tamaki took me to a Shinto shrine, and yesterday to a Buddhist temple — both enshrined in a modern Tokyo city. Was that a “pilgrimage” or a “visit” to the temple? At a deep philosophical level there is no difference whatsoever. But at the level of normal usage, the difference between visiting a temple and making a pilgrimage is significant. A sacred place of pilgrimage is not constructed by human agent, it manifests itself. In such a place there are shrines and temples, but here place is important and not the temple. When the Muslims invaded India, they thought that by destroying the temple they will destroy Hinduism. They razed many great temples of that time, but failed to minimize the value of the sacred places. Why?

How do you judge the value of a thing? You receive a three-line letter from your mother, and a thirty-page newspaper. Which is more valuable? Obviously, the mother’s letter. Is the God’s image a mere piece of stone? No. By appropriate rituals, life is

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\* This is text from the Open Class Lecture held at ICU Seabury Chapel on Nov. 10, 1999.

infused in the image of a God. For the worshippers — the believers — that image is a living God to interact with. So are the images of Buddha and Jesus Christ. Take another example. Two persons come to bathe in the river Ganga. One says: “What is there in a river? Two parts of hydrogen combine with one part of oxygen form water; that is all the river Ganga is.” The other says: “Ganga emanates from the feet of God Visnu, and flows majestically through the matted hair of God Shiva. Thousands and thousands of sages have performed penance on its shore, and for ages it has inspired men and women to perform countless meritorious acts duly. Such is the sacred Mother Ganga.” Imagine! even when a Hindu bathes in a pond or takes a shower-bath, he utters “Ganga, Ganga.” In both the cases, the water cleanses the body. However, to the one who considers Ganga the Holy Mother, the water cleanses not only the body but also the mind, the heart, and the soul.

Think of a sacred space! Sacredness lies in the mind of the believer. One skilled in geometry says, “Suppose A, B, C is a triangle.” Why should one suppose? The one who is willing to know the triangle patiently has to do so, because the lines of the triangle are not the real lines. A line is defined as the one which has length but no breadth. How can one show on the blackboard a line without breadth? When length appears, breadth is inherently there. So, the geometrician says — suppose. Similarly, the believer assuming sacredness as hypothesis says, “Suppose in this place lives the Lord of the Universe and hence that place is sacred, powerful.” Referring to the presence of the sacred, the believer speaks like a geometrician. He knows that God is there. He has no doubt whatsoever in the invisible existence of God.

The seers speak in a twilight language (*sandhyabhasa*) — partly hidden, partly revealed. Scriptures are deep and unfathomable. Sacred places (*tirtha*) are held to be holy on account of some wonderful natural characteristics, or on account of the peculiar strikingness (*grandeur*) of some watery place, or on account of the fact that some sages resorted to that place. Water is described as holy and purifying; it is invoked to heal various kinds of diseases and to confer happiness and prosperity. The confluence of rivers and the valleys of mountains have been described in Hindu scriptures as “especially holy.” Some scriptures, however, emphasize on one’s personal purity and virtue as an essential qualification for obtaining the full merit of pilgrimage. It is in this context that truth, compassion, and self-restraint have been called “mind *tirtha*”; a holy place is “immovable *tirtha*.” Parent, preceptor, husband, and wife are also *tirtha*. One finds mention of *tirtha* in the form of auspicious time (*kala-tirtha*). Places where rituals are performed, a house where the scriptures are being studied, a cow pen, a place where a sacred tree exists, and a place where a father and a worthy son dwell, are *tirtha*. Think of this sacred world view! The invisible order of the world is the message.

There are countless places of pilgrimage. The list given in Hindu scriptures is very

large, and yet incomplete. Their number is so large that they cannot be enumerated in detail even in hundreds of years. It is said that there are 33 billions of *tirthas* in the sky, in the aerial regions and on the earth, and all of them are located in the river Ganga. Many *tirthas* are named in one place. It is believed that 3 billions of them are located in Kashi (Varanasi, Banaras). Places of pilgrimage have been classified into four divisions, namely, those created by Gods, those associated with demons, those established by the sages, and those created by the kings. These classes of *tirthas* are assigned to the infinite cycles of the Four Ages, named *Krita* (golden), *Treta* (silver), *Dvapara* (brass), and *Kali* (iron). We are living in the “iron” Age.

The hiero-history and the sacred geography of a place of pilgrimage stand on four legs: the cosmic principle, the life principle, the self-organizing principle, and the transforming principle. The Hindu theory of pilgrimage has sprung from a cardinal conception of *brahman*, the ever-expanding universe within which there are many universes or worlds formed by a divine entity. The cosmic principle coincides with the life-principle. The conception of the “breathing *brahman*” allows the assumption that life throughout the universe exists by itself. That which is self-existent is also self-organized and self-transforming. So, with this understanding we can now talk of how pilgrimage is enacted.

On making pilgrimage one moves in a circle. Why? What does that really mean? According to Hindu sources, the circle symbolizes wholeness — represents the cosmos. The grand design of a place of pilgrimage is hidden in a geometrical scheme. For instance, Kashi (Fig 1) is represented by a holy circuit, a conch, and the image of Shiva.\* Here the circle signifies the cosmic space, the quadrangle symbolizes the four-faced, the four-cornered (direction) and the four-fold cosmic Age, the conch symbolizes the life-principle, and the anthropomorphic image symbolizes the universal Self. At another level, *Kashi* (the luminous space) is conceptualized in a mathematical array. It is situated on Shiva’s trident at the centre of space and time. Its cosmological structure, marked by a holy circuit in the radius of 5 *kosa* (15 kms), represents the 5 fundamental configurations — 5 sheaths or envelopes (the food sheath, the vital sheath, the psychic sheath, the knowledge sheath, and the blissful sheath), and 5 materiality (earth, water, fire, air, and sky). Kashi’s 3 segments signify the totality of the universe — 3 worlds, 3 microcosmic-macrocosmic properties, 3 Gods, 3 principles of life, 3 stages in man’s life, 3 aspects of time, 3 forms of knowledge, 3 kinds of fire, etc. All of them co-exist and co-operate. Kashi is a place where earthly dissolution is overcome and all beings rest here for ever. This Kashi is but an infinite void, *brahman*. The finite Kashi is a great cremation ground. The inner complexity of the infinite cosmic Kashi is made simpler and comprehensible at the finite earthly Kashi. The shrine of Madhyameshvara (the Lord of the centre) is the centre of

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\* For this Figure 1, please see “Beyond the Weary World” by the same author published in this issue p.10.

both the finite and the infinite Kashi. The pilgrims move on 3 concentric circles. The inner circuit, formed by 3 segments, represents the microcosm. Pilgrimage in the radius of 5 *kosa* signifies the mesocosm, and the larger circle in the radius of 84 *kosa* stands for the macrocosm where all the 33 billions of Gods and Goddesses reside. In this scheme of pilgrimage, a pilgrim moves towards the full realization of the innermost spiritual experience. Pilgrimage follows the cycle of time. All important shrines hold annual function when pilgrimage is indispensable. The year is divided into the summer solstice and the winter solstice. In both the parts of the year, the pilgrims circumambulate the Kashi-*ksetra*. Pilgrimage through 6 seasons, means a visit to all the 7 salvation-bestowing *tirthas* enshrined in Kashi. There is a scheme of pilgrimage for all the 12 months of the year, fortnightly pilgrimage, pilgrimage on specific lunar days, all the 7 days between Monday to Sunday — dedicated to the 7 planets — on certain auspicious time, on moments of crisis, on occasions connected with astronomical conjunctions, and as and when one feels the urge and necessity to make pilgrimage.

What have we learnt from this sacred geometry and mathematics of pilgrimage? Now, the sacred geometry of a place of pilgrimage signifies the cosmos — thus transcending the temporality of a physical space. The numbers used in this context, in reality, are not mathematical figures; they are cultural symbols. The significance of 3, 5, 84 lies in their sustainable meaning. As metasigns, these numbers have a special meaning for the culture in which they are conceived. They indicate the first principle of the structure of the world. Let me explain this, briefly: There are 3 principles, 3 stages in life and 3 worlds; hence 3 segments in a place of pilgrimage. The body is made of 5 elements; hence pilgrims move around the place covering 5 kilometres. Then 84. Life repeats itself eternally within 84 species. In this fanciful scheme of 84 (infinite), I know, I cannot escape the cycle of birth-and-death. In this life, I'm a human being. In my next life, I may be a bird or a cat or a dog. May be in my previous birth, I was a butterfly or whatever. So, inter-species transposition of the individual soul can be seen in terms of phylogeny at the biological level. In the liturgical context, cultural numbers make man inseparable from the other species, the other spaces, and the other moments of time. This can be realized at a suprahuman (cosmological) existence. I say so, because I have trust in sacred tradition. Think of that benevolent mind which conceived the beauty of the universe!

There is also an experiential evidence for realising the power of the sacred spaces. Now, let me give you some personal examples. My parents were craving for a male child. So, they went on pilgrimage to a place called Baidyanathdham, the place of God Shiva the *baidyanath* (the Lord of Medicine). For 3 nights they sat near the temple, did not eat anything — as if they were on hunger strike — and prayed the lord by concentrated mind. At last, in their dream, the God appeared and blessed them. After nine months I was born. My parents named me Baidyanath, believing that their

child is the gift of the Lord of Medicine. This is a matter of belief. If you believe then only you can know what it is. If you don't, you won't know. I believe in what my parents said. Now, my own experience. Forty years ago, I visited the famous cave of Amarnath — Shiva, the Lord of Immortality — located in the Kashmir valley. More than a hundred years ago, my maternal grandfather had visited that place, traversing some three thousand kilometres on foot. He was accompanied by twelve persons, of whom, I was told, four died on the way. As an anthropologist, I was curious to know as to how many of them could reach to that holy cave. On way to this shrine, there is another sacred place named Martand, the shrine of the Sun God. The sacred specialists of this place keep a record of the visiting pilgrims. So, there is a pilgrim-record from the 13th century onwards. I found that my grandfather had signed the register with ten people, which means two of his fellow pilgrims died on the way. Anthropological exploration over. From there, I proceeded to explore the profoundest mystery of pilgrimage to the holy cave. I was tired, and had fever. Somehow dragged on to a glacial river. I saw the old men and women bathing there. It then occurred to me that it is better to die at this holy place than to return home without 'seeing' the Lord of Immortality. Bathing is an essential part of Hindu pilgrimage. So, I took bath in that glacier. For a few minutes, I was unconscious. Someone raised me up. And I recovered. Entering into the cave, as I saw the immortal snowgod, I felt totally cured. My return journey was full of joy. For, I obeyed the call of God. This is my 'belief,' confirmed by experience.

Now, I must leave it to you to judge the value of pilgrimage. What I have said about my own experience may appear to be a culturally conditioned reality. But, I think, it is more than that. Man comes from a 'place' in time and returns to that 'place' — a mystic union with the sacred. So, a sacred place is essentially above and beyond the temporal cultural reality. It is obvious from many examples that mind is not necessarily conditioned by birth. I once had the fortune to make a pilgrimage to the famous cathedral Chartre, near Paris. As I entered the place, I realized that there is a mighty one, and I felt blessed. I went to another place near Barcelona, to visit the cathedral of the black Maria. In Mother Maria, I saw my Goddess Kali, manifest in that form. The manifestation is not an illusion. For me that was a spiritual vision of the supreme, beyond name and form.

Now, I stop here. And you can ask me questions. I will try to answer as much as I can, but I don't know to what extent I have been able to communicate with you.

### **(Questions and Discussions)**

**Questioner:** My brother-in-law and my nephew made four trips to Mecca. Their destination was in a geographical site. And it has the sacred quality. But could one think of one's life as pilgrimage — whole life as a pilgrimage? In other words, pilgrimage is a process trying to reach sacred. It transcends the ordinary and that kind of thing. Do you think of pilgrimage as a process, or can it occur independently of the

sacred site?

**Prof. Saraswati:** Yes, indeed, it is possible to make pilgrimage independent of the geographical site. For an ordinary person, like me, pilgrimage to sacred geographical site is occasional. But there are virtuous persons, saints and mendicants who go on “perpetual pilgrimage” — moving from one sacred site to another, not stopping anywhere for more than three nights. However, the destination of pilgrimage is not on this earth. Pilgrimage is essentially a personal quest for salvation — freedom from earthly existence. The merit of pilgrimage is earned individually. The Indian tradition interiorizes the whole concept of pilgrimage. The interiorization of sacred places within Man. According to the Buddhist Tantra, the names of the places called *ksetra*, *pitha* and so on are mentioned for the benefit of simple fools who wander about the country. They are, therefore, interpreted as symbols for the places within the body, that is to say, they are external equivalent of that which exists within. The beautiful verse underlying this theme reads as follows:

When the mind goes to rest,  
The bonds of the body is destroyed,  
And when the one flavour of the Innate pours forth,  
There is neither outcaste nor brahmin.  
Here is the sacred Jamuna and here the River Ganga,  
Here are Prayaga and Banaras, here are Sun and Moon.  
Here I have visited in my wanderings  
shrines and such places of pilgrimage,  
For I have not seen another shrine  
blissful like my own body.

**Questioner:** Just one more question, then I’ll be quiet. I have the video tape in the office, it’s called “Spirit and Nature.” It’s based on a conference at Middlebury College. Attending the conference were Dalai Lama, prominent Muslim theologians, historians of western science and Islamic science, and many other people. A Muslim scholar made a comment on science, and he spoke of desacredization of nature. It is in fashion in western science and technology. Do you think we are in an ongoing process of desacredization? Are we losing our sense of the sacred? When I try to see the stars of cosmos in night here in Tokyo, it is very difficult. If I were in desert somewhere, I would have some kind of affinity with the cosmos. Is that our own cultural fatalistic view?

**Prof. Saraswati:** Thank you for asking such a pertinent question related to the future of religion, the future of man. Of all the earthly beings, man is the most complete and, therefore, the most complex character. But there is something higher than man. And that is Time. Man is caught up in the noose of time. The Indian theory of the Four Ages characterizes proportionate decrease in *dharma* (sacred, truth) and increase in

*adharma* (secularity, untruth). We are living in the *Kali* (iron) Age, the most inferior of the Four Ages. So, we cannot escape from the ordering of time. Can we deny the prevailing secularity and untruth of the ‘dark age’? But when we turn our eyes to inward reality, we do find the light in the deepest depth of humanity. Now, briefly let us turn to terminological clarification on secularism and science. Secularism is an ideology that stems from the western sociological theory of binary opposition between sacred and secular — the two modes of being in the world, two existential situations assumed by man in the course of his history. There is another stream of thought which signifies a break from the modern western sociology. In Indian vision, for instance, the sacred and the secular are dialectically, rather than dichotomously, related. The sacred-secular continuum is not merely an ideational principle, a philosophical speculation, but an empirical reality that can be observed at critical moments in life, as also in the social organization of sacred tradition. Further, modern man displays a confusing vagueness about science and religion. The ‘sacred science’ of traditional societies does not seem to be much at variance with some of the theories in modern science. For instance, in Hinduism the universe at large is believed to have an ontological independence of its own. It is characterized, as I said before, by the term “brahman,” from the root *brh*, to expand. Surprisingly, and not so surprisingly, the ancient sages had thought of an expanding *brahman*, long before the concept of “expanding universe” was introduced in modern science. Most cosmologists today believe that Big Bang was the abrupt creation of the universe from literally nothing — no space, no time, no matter. The ancient sages had said so, exactly in the same language: “At first there was neither being nor non-being, neither space nor the sky, neither death nor non-death, no distinction between day and night. There was absolute vacuity.” Further, scientists have suggested that at the time of Big Bang the universe was infinitesimally small and infinitely dense. It is fitting that the upanishadic sages had called it *bindu*, the dimensionless point. I can go on adding up many such allusions to prove that in reality there is no difference between the modern (Western) secular science and the traditional (Asian) sacred science. The perception of this underlying unity of science and religion leads us to say that in this “age of darkness,” we can still see the light about us, only if we step out of ourselves. Have I confused you people? I hope not. We are not only matter (earthly being) but also mind and spirit. And, therefore, let us seek something beyond matter.

**Prof. Kasai:** May be this time, since you distributed such a beautiful paper on Kashi (Varanasi, Banaras) — it’s a fascinating picture — will you give some explanation for the importance of this place?

**Prof. Saraswati:** Thank you for taking me back to Kashi. This place is famous for death. All sacred places are good for pilgrimaging — for earning merits, for fulfilling desires — asking for health, wealth, progeny, and everything else (including success in examination). But again Kashi is a place where people go for achieving the ulti-



mate. What is that? That, indeed, is Death — peaceful death, salvation. So, dying people come to this city, their last pilgrimage on the earth. My maternal grandmother died in this place. My mother's brother was critically ill in his village home — more than a thousand kilometre away from Kashi. He was brought to this sacred place in a critical state, and was taken straight from the railway station to the river Ganga where he breathed his last. My father also died in this sacred city. And I too aspire to die in Kashi. One of the many names of Kashi is Mahasmashan, the great cremation ground. In praise of this sacred place, a 16th century poet said:

Can the wretched Indra (the King of God) stand a match for the dog who is infused with the longing for an abode in the city of Kashi?

The city of Kashi is a barren field for the action-corns wherein the low and the learned get salvation without the distinction of caste and creed.

Who can estimate the value of Kashi wherein death is but a blessing, ashes are but an ornament, and the lion-cloth but a silken garment.

So, I think, that is my Kashi. I aspire to live and die here. Here death is auspicious, an event of rejoicing. The funeral procession of the Doms, the custodian of the sacred fire of the cremation ground, is marked by singing and dancing. Other communities also celebrate death.

**Prof. Kasai:** I'd like to ask one more question. I have seen in Kashi the sharing of the moment of the ultimate. For example, if one's father is dying, the family members come here with the dying person. So, it's a sort of sharing the moment of the ultimate. And this seems to me very, very important in India, and most decisive. And so, we simply ask: one has to really think over life oneself very, very deeply. I know that, but still I would like to be guided, to see from your point of view, from your traditional point of view.

**Prof. Saraswati:** I am beholden to you, Sir, for raising this question which is deep — knowable only to those who are raised up above all. It can't be answered in the language of a sociologist or an anthropologist. Let me make an effort to illustrate the Hindu way of death. In Kashi, there are the *Kashi Mukti Bhavan* and the *Kashi Labha Bhavan*, the two shelters that facilitate one's passing away. Here one is not given medical assistance but exclusively ritual assistance. The dying person is given the holy water and the basil leaves. By reading scriptures, prayers and devotional songs, the family members keep up the spirit of the occasion. In some cases, the dying man may assume *sannyasa*, the fourth stage of life. This is called *atur sannyasa*, the renunciation on the deathbed. The ritual involves shaving of head, putting on a saffron robe, and undergoing an initiation rites. The final ritual aims at facilitating the journey that the dying person is about to undertake. At the last stage, the dying person makes a series of gifts, which include cotton balls, iron pots, salt, a piece of land, a cow, etc. The gift of a cow (*godan*) is called *vaitarni*, or "she who makes one cross



over.” The dying man holds in his right hand the tail of the cow which symbolizes the crossing of the river Vaitarni. It is believed that the soul will cross this river of blood and excrements located at the southern extremity of the human world, marking the boundary line with the kingdom of the God of Death. There the person dies happily, peacefully, in the presence of his family members.

**Prof. Kasai:** One more question further. And, please kindly be patient for me. I will stop after this. So, family members, just close, just standing beside, for example, father’s passing away. This moment is “sharing” something together, the father’s passing away. It is described in a much more simple way. May be it is almost impossible to describe or characterize the condition of passing away, moving into the moment of the ultimate. But there are the family members with that dying person who was really devoted to the family members whole life. So, sharing the moment of ultimate is something very special, very, very special. And you have explained the destiny of that person passing away. Now I can understand from traditional point of view. But my question relates to this sharing together that moment. Not only that person passing away to the ultimate. But the presence of the family members together. This is the most sacred moment for everybody. How is this sacred moment interpreted? That is my question. The other question, relates to the destiny of the person passing away, and he will not return. This I understand from the traditional point of view. But this sharing the moment of death does not happen today in the world. That’s why I question. The old people, the parents, will work almost dying for the family members, but they find themselves utterly, you know, alone at the time of death. The children enjoy their lives, and parents, you know, dying alone. And this we find, for example, in Endō Shūsaku’s *Fukai Kawa Deep River* raised this question. But, in Indian tradition people take this moment most serious, which is forgotten in modern times. We say, we don’t care the old parents, let’s go to the hospital. And this is the trend more and more. Lack of gratefulness, and always ego-centred. But is there in Banaras, really sharing, watching? I understand, you know the destiny of the person. But this moment of sharing is utterly lacking these days. Why this is so?

**Prof. Saraswati:** Thank you Professor for bringing me on the right track. The answer is not easy. Let me try. I recall what happened in my own family: As a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, I stayed in Shimla and my family (parents, wife and children) lived far away in Kashi. My old parents were brought from a remote village in Bihar to spend the rest of their life in this holy city. Although my father was enjoying the company of his beloved grand-children and was satisfied with the service of his daughter-in-law, my absence made him ever anxious. Why? Because there is a belief among the Hindus that the eldest son must be present at the time of death, he is responsible for the performance of the last rite; the salvation of his parents depends on this ritual. It so happened that when he was critically ill we had the winter vacation, and so I came down to Kashi. He was admitted in a hospital where

his condition gradually deteriorated. So, after a few days, we brought him home and kept him under the medical care of a doctor. This went on for sometime, but no improvement. So, I asked the doctor, “Will medicine save his life? Should he continue the medicine any more?” The doctor said, “I am a physician, I have unlimited trust in medicine.” My father was unwilling to take medicine. We realized, his death is round the corner, no medicine can help. He lived on holy water for three days. We found sweet scent issuing from his body. On this moment of death, the sacred scriptures were recited and the ritual of *vaitarni* was performed at 2 AM. He breathed his last in my lap in the presence of my mother, younger brother and all other family members. We waited for friends and relatives to join the funeral procession. Repeating the name of Rama — *ram nam satya hai* (the name of Rams is the only Truth) — the procession consisting of four generations of kinsmen and a large number of friends, carrying the corpse left for the cremation ghat. His body was cremated on the bank of the river Ganga. This was my first experience of performing a funeral rite. I was deeply upset. My father’s bodily life came to an end in a remarkable manner. His body lay on the stock of wood. I looked at his face. He was in state of a deep sleep — calm and beautiful. I had never seen him in such a glory. When the sacrificial fire was lit up, his face brightened, his body transformed into smoke and vapour, and his soul went upward. His body died. He was cremated. The death rites continued for ten days. Every day, I offered him a rice-ball and holy water. On the tenth day, ten rice-balls were offered, symbolizing the merger of his soul with his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather and in this order up to the ninth preceding generation. This ritual is called “merging with the ancestors” (*sapindikaran*). He was thus transformed, merged, into the lineage of ancestors (*pitris*). Whenever we perform ancestral rites in the family, we feel his presence. When I die, my son will do the same, and my soul will merge with my father. Thus, all individual souls transform into a universal soul. Hence it is said that death is auspicious, a moment of fulfilment. It is obligatory for all kinsmen to assemble and to share the moment with the dying person as also with the person who performs the death-rites. In a Hindu village, this moment is shared by all the villagers, regardless of their caste and social status. Feeding the learned, the poor and the relatives continue through the ten-day death ritual. This is still a living tradition. Now, those who seek immortality of the body do not know the secret of life, they cannot see the “beauty of death.” A “modern secular” man is unwilling to “share the moment of death” even with his parents and close kins; to him the bodily life is all, and death the end. Modern science is making experiments with the prolongation of life in the hope to discover an elixir of eternal youth. Today, an aged man is viewed as an undesirable member of the family. He is but a “paltry thing,” a “tattered cloth.” Hence, no communication with the old, no sharing the moment of death. We are saddened by this situation. More and more people talk about human rights (physical power) as fewer and fewer care about humans. Attitude towards the old and the dying is the only test of humanity, of civilization. Animals also produce offspring, but struggle with each other for existence. Marriage, kinship and

ritual are peculiar to man, the soul and spirit of humanity. Every human marriage is an initiation of the cosmic event — the marriage of the daughter of the Sun with Soma the Moon. Kinship continues beyond this life. Parents are said to be Gods on the earth. Old age is the best part of one's life to be celebrated. There is a custom in many parts of India to celebrate the 60th birthday when a married couple re-enact their wedding ritual. The older the body, the younger the soul. Death is the end of bodily life, a natural event. It shortens the journey, it is good for the soul. It gives a new and beautiful form for the soul to inhabit, a new vehicle to ride. The *Katha Upanisad* expounds a deeper philosophical thought. The God of Death reveals the secret of life to Nachiketa:

Know thou the soul riding in a chariot,  
The body as the chariot.  
Know thou the intellect is the chariot driver,  
And the mind as the reins.

The senses, they say, are the horses;  
The objects of sense, what they range over;  
The self combined with senses and mind  
Wise men call 'the enjoyer.'

He who has not understanding,  
Whose mind is not constantly held firm —  
His senses are uncontrolled,  
Like the vicious horses of a chariot-driver

He, however, who has understanding,  
Whose mind is constantly held firm —  
His senses are under control,  
Like the good horses of a chariot-driver.

Now, let me conclude by saying that there is no difference between your soul and my soul, our souls and the word-soul. The upanishadic thinkers have said so. As the *Taittiriya Upanishad* says: "Both he who is here in a person and he is yonder in the Sun — he is one." The world is realistically explained in *Prashna Upanishad*: "As birds resort to a tree for a resting-place, even so, O friend, it is the supreme Soul (*Atman*) that everything here resorts." The modern secular man has abandoned this world view. He lives in an anthropocentric world divided into geographical or political countries, forgets his "inner nationality" (real self), and follows materialist ideologies (political and scientific).

**President:** Unfortunately, the time is over. So we have to stop here. Thank you very much, Professor Saraswati!

**Prof. Saraswati:** I find no words which can adequately express my feelings of this moment. I knew Professor Kasai as a Gandhian and a seeker of spiritual knowledge. I

have been blessed with an opportunity to visit the place where he, my dearest friend, is working. ICU has deeply impressed me, it is a true University of holy wisdom. Here the youths are studying Gandhian thought under a great teacher, a true Gandhian in thought and behaviour. Here the students evoke fragrance of goodness and innocence. They have spoken to my heart. My thanks to ICU for which I came. I owe to Professors Kasai and Steele who introduced me to their institution. And to my young friends Ayako Tokuda Uno, Shinya Ishizaka, Tamaki Watanabe and others whose loving memories I shall carry all my life. It is appropriate in this place to thank those teachers of the ICU from whom I have really learnt a lot during my brief stay. Thank you very, very much, indeed, for your presence and patience.